1 JOHN 2:3-27

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS[4]	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Christ Our Advocate	The Basis of Fellowship with Him (1:5-2:2)	Obedience	Christ Our Helper	To Walk in the Light (1:5-2:28)
				First Condition: To Break With Sin (1:8-2:3)
2:1-6	The Test of Knowing Him	2:1-2	2:1-2	Second Condition: To Keep the Commandments, Especially That of Love
	2:3-11	2:3-6	2:3-6	2:3-11
The New Commandment		Love for One Another	The New Command	
2:7-14		2:7-11	2:7-8	
	Their Spiritual State	True Relationship to God in Christ	2:9-11	Third Condition: Detachment from the World
	2:12-14	2:12-14	2:12-13	2:12-17
	Do Not Love the World	True Appraisal of the World	2:14	
2:15-17	2:15-17	2:15-17	2:15-17	
The Antichrist	Deceptions of the Last Hour	Loyalty to the True Faith	The Enemy of Christ	Fourth Condition: To Be on Guard Against Antichrists
2:18-25	2:18-23	2:18-25	2:18-19	2:18-28
			2:20-21	
	Let Truth Abide in You		2:22-23	

	2:24-27		2:24-25
2:26-27		2:26-27	2:26-27

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 2:3-27

A. It is very difficult to outline 1 John because of its recurrent themes. However, most commentators agree that 1 John 2 continues the themes of 1 John 1, which are the characteristics of fellowship with God, both positive and negative.

B. There is a structural parallel between 1 John 1 and 2. John presents the message in contrast to the false assertions of the Gnostics.

Chapter 1	Chapter 2
1. if we say. . . (1 Jn. 2:6-7)	1. The one saying. . . (1 Jn. 2:4-5)
2. if we say. . . (1 Jn. 2:8-9)	2. The one saying. . . (1 Jn. 2:6)
3. if we say. . . (1 Jn. 2:10)	3. The one saying. . . (1 Jn. 2:8-11)

C. This context lists several tests or evidences which reveal a true believer (1 John 2:3-25)
1. Willingness to confess sin (initially and continually) (1 John 1:9)
2. Lifestyle obedience (1 John 2:3-6)
3. Lifestyle love (1 John 2:7-11)
4. Victory over the evil (1 John 2:12-14)
5. Forsaking the world (1 John 2:15-17)
6. Perseverance (1 John 2:19)
7. Correct doctrine (1 John 2:20-24; 4:1-3)

D. Special Theological Concepts (in 1 John 2:18-19)
1. "the last hour" (1 John 2:18)
   a. This phrase and similar phrases, such as "the last days," refer to the period of time from Jesus' birth in Bethlehem to the Second Coming. The kingdom has come, but is not yet fully consummated.
   b. The people of Israel during the interbiblical period began to believe in two ages, the current evil age and the age of righteousness ushered in by the Spirit, which was still future. What the OT did not clearly reveal was the two comings of the Messiah, the first as Savior and the second as Consummator. These two ages overlap.
   SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME.
   c. This is the metaphorical use of the term "hour" (*kairos*) as an unspecified period of time (cf. John 4:21,23; 5:25,28; 16:2)
   SPECIAL TOPIC: HOUR.
2. "the antichrist" (1 John 2:18)

Only John uses the term "antichrist" (cf. 1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7). Notice in 1 John 2:18 it is both PLURAL and SINGULAR (cf. 2 John 7).

a. There are references to the same end-time person in other biblical writers.
   1) Daniel – horn of "the Little Fourth Beast" (cf. Dan. 7:7-8,23-26; 9:24-27)
   2) Jesus – "Abomination of Desolation" (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; term from Dan. 11:31)
   3) John – "Beast coming out of the sea" (cf. Rev. 13:1-10)
   4) Paul – "Man of Sin" or "Man of Lawlessness" (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3-4)

b. John also makes a distinction between the eschatological person and the recurring spirit or attitude always present in the world (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3; 2 John 7; Matt. 24:5,24; Mark 13:6,22).

c. The PREPOSITION *anti* in Greek can mean (1) against or (2) instead of. This is as significant as the use of both the SINGULAR and PLURAL in 1 John 2:18. History is replete with those who have opposed God and His Christ
   1) Antiochus IV Epiphanes (little horn of Daniel 8; 11:36-45)
   2) Nero and Domitian (claimed deity but not Messiahship)
   3) Atheistic Communism
   4) Secular Humanism

   But also this is matched by those who are not against Christ, but claim to be the Christ.
   1) the false teachers of Matt. 24:5,24 and Mark 13:6,22
   2) modern cult leaders
   3) the Antichrist (Dan. 7:8,23-26; 9:24-27; 2 Thess. 2:3; and Revelations 13)

d. Christians in every age will experience both false teachers who deny Christ and false Messiahs who claim to be Christ. However, one day, the last day, one special incarnation of evil (i.e., the Antichrist) will do both!

3. "Abides in You" (1 John 2:19,24,27,28)

a. Most modern evangelicals stress the need for a personal initial decision to trust/faith/believe in Christ, and this is surely true. However, the Bible's emphasis is not on a decision, but on discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

b. The doctrine of the Security of the Believer must be inseparably linked to the doctrine of Perseverance. It is not an either/or option, but a both/and biblical reality. In reality "abiding" is a biblical warning (cf. John 15:6)!

c. Other passages on abiding are Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,18-23; Mark 13:13; John 8:31; 15:1-27; 1 Cor. 15:2; Gal. 6:1; Rev. 2:2,7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7.

SPECIAL TOPIC: "ABIDING" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "RECEIVE," "BELIEVE," "CONFESS/PROFESS," AND "CALL UPON"?

SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:3-6

3By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

2:3 "By this we know that we have come to know Him" Literally this is "we know that we have known Him." This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE followed by a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE emphasizing that the Christians of these traumatized churches can have the full assurance of their salvation despite the Gnostic false teachings.

The word "know" is used in its Hebrew sense of personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5; see SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW) and its Greek sense of facts about something or someone. The gospel is both a person and a body of truth. The emphases in this phrase are

1. we can know God
2. we can know what He wants for our lives
3. we can know that we know! (cf. 1 John 5:13)

One of the assurances of our relationship with God is revealed by our actions and motives (cf. Matthew 7; James, 1 Peter). This is a recurrent theme of 1 John (cf. 1 John 2:3,5; 3:24; 4:13; 5:2,13).

John's writings use two Greek words for "know" (*ginōskō* and *oida*) often (27 times in the five chapters of 1 John) and synonymously. There seems to be no discernable semantic distinction between these terms in Koine Greek. The choice is stylistic. It is also interesting that John does not use the intensified term *epiginōskō* (so common in Paul).

John is writing to encourage believers as well as refute heresy. The Gospel of John and 1 John use the terms for "know" more than any other of the books in the NT. 1 John is a book of assurance based on knowledge of the gospel and commensurate lifestyle love and obedience (cf. The book of James).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GNOSTICISM

SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE

▣ **"if"** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means potential action.

▣ **"we keep His commandments"** Notice the conditional element ("if" and a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE). The new covenant is unconditional as to God's offer but conditional as to mankind's repentant faith and obedient response (cf. 1 John 2:3-5; 3:22,24; 5:2,3; John 8:51-52; 14:15,21,23; 15:10; Rev. 2:26; 3:8,10; 12:17; 14:12). One of the evidences for true conversion is obedience to the Light (both Jesus and the gospel, cf. Luke 6:46). Even in the OT obedience was better than sacrificial ritual (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Jer. 7:22-23). Obedience does not bring or secure salvation, but it does evidence salvation. It is not the basis (cf. Eph. 2:8-9), but the fruit (cf. Eph. 2:10).

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

SPECIAL TOPIC: KEEP

2:4 "The one who says" This is the textual marker for John's diatribe format.

▣ **"I have come to know Him"** This is one of several assertions of the false teachers (cf. 1 John 1:6,8,10; 2:4,6,9). This is a diatribe ("the one who says. . .") similar to Malachi, Romans, and James. The false teachers were claiming to know (PREFECT TENSE) God, but were trying to separate salvation from godly living. They were separating justification from sanctification. They claimed superior (i.e., secret oral teachings from Jesus) knowledge of God, but their lifestyles revealed their true motives (Luke 6:43-45).

▣ **"and does not keep His commandments"** This is PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE which speaks of habitual lifestyle action. Our lives reveal our spiritual orientation (cf. Matthew 7; 1 John 3:6,9). 1 John 2:4 expresses the truth negatively, while 2:5 expresses the same truth positively.

▣ **"is a liar"** There is nothing worse than self-willed deception! Obedience is evidence of true conversion. You shall know them by their fruit (cf. Matt. 7:15-23; Luke 6:43-45; 1 John 3:6,9).

John calls several religious people (teachers, preachers) liars (cf. 1 John 1:6; 2:4,22; 4:20). They are religious but not right with God (cf. Matt. 7:21-23)!

1. 1 John 1:7 – "If we say we have fellowship with Him yet walk in darkness, we lie"
2. 1 John 2:4 – "if one says, 'I have come to know Him, and does not keep His commandments,'" he is a liar
3. 1 John 2:22 – "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ"
4. 1 John 4:20 – "if womeone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar"

2:5 "but whoever keeps His word" This is PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIBE which speaks of habitual lifestyle action. The authors of the UBS' *A Handbook on The Letters of John* (Haas, Jonge, and Swellengrebel) offer an interesting comment on this Greek construction: "a relative pronoun with the Greek particle, '*an*' or '*ean*' and the following verb in the subjunctive occurs in 1 John 3:17,22; 4:15; 5:15; 3 John 5. It seems to express generally occurring circumstances" (p. 40). Obedience is a crucial aspect of covenant faith. This is the central message of 1 John and James. One cannot say He knows God and yet reject both the living Word and the written Word by lifestyle sin (cf. 1 John 3:6,9)!

▣ **"in him the love of God has truly been perfected"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE which speaks of completed action (cf. 1 John 4:12,17,18). It is uncertain, grammatically speaking, whether the GENITIVE is speaking of

1. God's love for us (cf. 1 John 4:12)
2. our love for God (cf. 1 John 5:3)
3. God's love in general in believers' hearts

The term "perfect" (*telos*, cf. 1 John 4:12,17,18) means mature, complete, or fully equipped for an assigned task (cf. Eph. 4:12), not without sin (cf. 1 John 1:8,10).

SPECIAL TOPIC: END OR FULL (*telos*)

▣ **"By this we know that we are in Him"** Here again is the emphasis on believers' ability to have a faith confidence in their relationship with God. The concept of our being in Him ("abiding," cf. 1 John 2:6) is a recurrent theme of John's writings (cf. John 14:20,23; 15:4-10; 17:21,23,26; 1 John 2:24-28; 3:6,24; 4:13,16).

2:6 "abides" The NT also asserts that both the Father and the Son abide in us (cf. John 14:23 and 17:21). Notice that even in a clause which emphasizes assurance there is the need for, and implied warning, of "ought" (cf. 1 John 2:6, PRESENT INFINITIVE, "abides in Him"). The gospel is a conditional covenant with rights and responsibilities!

SPECIAL TOPIC: "ABIDING" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE

▣ **"ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked"** This is another emphasis on "true faith" as lifestyle faith (cf. James 2:14-26). Faith is not only a decision, but an ongoing personal relationship with Jesus that naturally issues in daily Christlike living. Eternal life has observable characteristics! This is parallel to 1 John 1:7. The goal of Christianity is not just heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:15)! We are saved to serve. We are sent on mission as He was sent on mission. As He laid down His life for others, so we too, must see ourselves as servants (cf. 1 John 3:16).

"He" is literally "that One," which is a common idiom in John's writings for "Jesus" (cf. John 2:21; 19:35; 1 John 2:6; 3:3,5,7,16; 4:17). Often it is used in a derogatory way (cf. John 7:11;

9:12,28; 19:21).

If "that One" refers to Jesus, then who does the "in Him" of 1 John 2:6a refer to? John often used a purposeful ambiguity. It could refer to the Father (cf. John 15:1-2,9-10) or the Son (cf. John 15:4-6). This same ambiguity can be illustrated in "the Holy One" of 1 John 2:20.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOLY ONE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:7-11

[7]Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. [8]On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. [9]The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now. [10]The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. [11]But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

2:7 "Beloved" John often calls his readers by affectionate terms (cf. 1 John 2:1). This term was used by the Father to refer to Jesus at His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17) and transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:5). It is a common designation of the saved in John's letters (cf. 1 John 3:2,21; 4:1,7,11; and 3 John 1,2,5,11).

The Textus Receptus has "brothers" (MSS K, L, NKJV), but 1 John uses this as a VOCATIVE only in 1 John 3:13. "Beloved" is supported by the uncial Greek manuscripts (א, A, B, C, P, and the Vulgate, Peshitta, Coptic, and Armenian versions (see Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*, p. 708).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TEXTUAL CRITICISM

▣ **"I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment"** This is characteristic of John's writings (cf. John 13:34; 15:12,17). The command was not new in terms of time, but new in terms of quality. Believers are commanded to love one another as Jesus loved them (cf. John 13:34).

The "old commandment" can be understood in two senses.

1. the Law of Moses (i.e., Lev. 19:18)
2. the teachings of Jesus recorded in John's Gospel (i.e., John 13:34; 15:12,17)

SPECIAL TOPIC: "COMMANDMENT" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

▣ **"the old commandment"** In 1 John 2:3 the word "commandment" is PLURAL, but here it is SINGULAR. This seems to imply that love fulfills all other commandments (cf. Gal. 5:22; 1 Cor. 13:13). Love is the gospel's mandate!

▣ **"which you had from the beginning"** This is an IMPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which refers to the hearer's first encounter with the gospel message (cf. 1 John 2:24; 1:1; 3:11; 2 John 5-6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: *ARCHĒ*

▣ **"have heard"** The Textus Receptus adds the phrase "from the beginning" (used in the earlier part of the verse).

2:8 "which is true in Him" The gender of this PRONOUN changes from the FEMININE in 1 John 2:7, which matches "commandment," to the NEUTER, which addresses the whole gospel. A similar change in PRONOUN is found in Eph. 2:8-9.

▣ **"commandment"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: "COMMANDMENT" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

▣ **"the darkness is passing away"** This is PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE (according to A. T. Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 212). For those who know God in Christ, the new age has dawned and is continuing to dawn in their hearts and minds (i.e., realized eschatology).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

▣ **"the true Light is already shining"** Jesus is the light of the world (cf. John 1:4-5,9; 8:12), which is biblical imagery for truth, revelation, and moral purity. See notes at 1 John 1:5 and 1:7. The new age has dawned!

2:9 "*yet* hates his brother" This is PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE which speaks of a settled ongoing attitude. Hate is an evidence of darkness (cf. Matt. 5:21-26). Notice the literary antithetical parallelism (i.e., v. 9, NEGATIVE; v. 10, POSITIVE).

2:10 "The one who loves his brother abides in the Light" PRESENT TENSE VERBALS dominate this context. Love is an evidence of believer's salvation and personal relationship with and knowledge of truth and light. This is the new, yet old commandment (cf. 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11,21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: "ABIDING" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

NASB, NKJV, REB	**"and there is no cause for stumbling in him"**
NRSV	**"in such a person there is no cause for stumbling"**
TEV	**"there is nothing in us that will cause someone else to sin"**
NJB	**"there is in him nothing to make him fall away"**
Peshitta	**"And there is no cause for displeasure in him"**

There are two possible translations of this verse.

1. the believer who walks in love will not personally stumble (cf. 1 John 2:11)
2. the believer who walks in love will not cause others to stumble (cf. Matt. 18:6; Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:13)

Both are true! The gospel benefits the believer and others (both other believers and the lost).

In the OT "stumbling" is the opposite of faith (sure-footed, stable stance). God's will and commands were illustrated by a straight, level, unobstructed path or way. This is how "walk" can be imagery for lifestyle.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OT

2:11 "But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness" There is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (hates) followed by a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE (walks). Hate is a sign of unbelief (cf. 1 John 3:15; 4:20). Light and darkness, love and hate cannot exist in the same person (yet they do). This is typical of John's black or white statements. He expresses the ideal! Often, however, believers struggle with prejudice, unlove, and neglect! The gospel brings both an instantaneous change and a change through time.

▣ **"the darkness has blinded his eyes"** This can refer either to believers' remaining sin nature (cf. 2 Pet.1:8-9), or the actions of Satan (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). There are three enemies of mankind:

1. the fallen world system

2. a personal angelic tempter, Satan
3. our own fallen, Adamic nature (cf. Eph. 2:2-3,16; James 4)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:12-14

[12]I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. [13]I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. [14]I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

2:12-14 All of the VERBS in these verses (except "I am writing") are PERFECT TENSE, which speaks of action in the past resulting in an ongoing state of being. As the previous context addressed the false teachers, this context addresses the believer. There are three different titles given to believers: "little children," "fathers," and "young men." This paragraph does not fit smoothly into the context of lifestyle evidences of assurance. It is possible that we are not dealing with three groups but a literary device describing the settled condition of all Christians.

There is a series of six *hoti* CLAUSES in 1 John 2:12-14. They may be PURPOSE CLAUSES (NASB, NRSV, NJB, "because") or simply a literary way to introduce statements of fact (NET Bible, "that").

1. that their sins are forgiven (1 John 2:12)
2. that they know Him (1 John 2:13,14 [twice])
3. that through Christ they have overcome the devil (1 John 2:13)
4. that they are strong in the Word of God (1 John 2:14)

▣ **2:12 "because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake"** Jesus' ministry is mankind's only hope for forgiveness (PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE). In Hebrew understanding, the name equals the character and personality (cf. 1 John 3:23; 3 John 7; Rom. 10:9-13; Phil. 2:6-11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD

2:13 "Him who has been from the beginning" The PRONOUNS in 1 John are ambiguous and can refer to God the Father or God the Son. In context this one refers to Jesus. It is a statement of pre-existence and, thereby, His Deity (cf. John 1:1,15; 3:13; 8:48-59; 17:5,24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). If this is correct, this is a different use of "from the beginning" (i.e., "the devil has sinned from the beginning," 1 John 3:8)), which usually means the beginning of Jesus' ministry (i.e., I John 1:13; 2:24; 3:11).

▣ **"you have overcome"** This is a recurrent promise and warning in 1 John (cf. 1 John 2:14; 4:4, 5:4-5, 18-19). This is expressed in a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which speaks of the culmination of a process. Here again, John writes in black and white terms (this realized eschatological victory is so reminiscent of the Gospel of John). Believers are victors, yet because of the "already but not yet" tension of the Kingdom of God, they still struggle with sin, temptation, persecution, and death.

▣ **"the evil one"** This is a reference to Satan, who is mentioned again in 1 John 2:14. 1 John 2:13 and 14 are parallel.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

▣ **"because you know the Father"** One of the biblical connotations of "know" involves the Hebrew sense of intimate personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5) and the Greek concept of "facts about." The gospel is

1. a person to welcome (Jesus)
2. truths about that person (doctrine) to accept
3. a life like that person to live!

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)

2:14 "you are strong" Notice that their strength is based on the abiding word of God. This is similar to Paul's admonitions in Col. 3:16; Eph. 6:10-18. The abiding word is the gospel. It is both

1. conceptual and personal
2. God initiated and individually received
3. both a decision and a discipleship
4. both truth and trustworthiness

There is purposeful ambiguity, so common in John's writings!

▣ **"the word of God abides in you"** This personifies the concept of the word of God (the gospel, cf. 1 John 2:24). This is an allusion to John 15. It is used in a negative sense in John 5:38 and 8:37.

SPECIAL TOPIC: "ABIDING" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

▣ **"you have overcome the evil one"** This is an emphasis on the perseverance of true saints. It is found again in 1 John 2:17,19,24,27,28; 5:18; and 2 John 9. The doctrine of the security of the believer must be balanced with the truth that those who are truly redeemed will hold out until the end (cf. Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21). This does not imply sinlessness now, though that is a theoretical possibility in Christ's finished work (cf. Romans 6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

SPECIAL TOPIC: DEVIL.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:15-17

15Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

2:15 "Do not love" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means to stop an act that is already in progress. The love of the world characterized one sect of the Gnostic false teachers.

▣ **"the world"** This term is used in two different senses in the NT:

1. the physical planet and/or the created universe (cf. John 3:16; 16:33; 1 John 4:14)
2. human society organized and functioning apart from God (cf. 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1,13; 4:4-5; 5:4-5,19)

The first refers to initial physical creation (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the second to fallen creation (cf. Genesis 3).

SPECIAL TOPIC: *KOSMOS* (world)

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN GOVERNMENT

▣ **"nor the things in the world"** This seems to refer to

1. a love of material objects (cf. 1 John 2:16)
2. the things the world has to offer: power, prestige, influence, etc. (cf. Rom. 12:2; James 1:27)

This fallen world system attempts to meet all of mankind's needs apart from God. It structures life in such a way that humans appear to be independent. Institutions that all of us are grateful for can become idolatrous when they allow independence from God. Examples include:

1. human governmental systems
2. human educational systems
3. economic systems
4. medical systems
5. political systems

As Augustine said so well, "man has a God-shaped hole" in his life. We try to fill that hole with earthly things, but we can only find peace and fulfilment in Him! We were created for fellowship with Him! Independence is the curse of Eden!

▣ **"If"** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means potential action. What we love is evidence of whose we are. . .God's or Satan's (cf. Matt. 6:19-24,33-34).

2:16 "the lust of the flesh" This refers to fallen mankind's self-seeking attitude (cf. Gal. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:3; 1 Pet. 2:11). This is the essence of the Fall of Genesis 3.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FLESH (*sarx*)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FALL

▣ **"the lust of the eyes"** The Jews recognized that the eyes are the windows of the soul. Sin begins in the thought life and works its way out to action. One's actions develop into lifestyle domination (e.g., Pro. 23:7).

▣ **"and the boastful pride of life"** This refers to human pride apart from God (i.e., humans trusting in their own resources). In *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, vol. II, Raymond Brown, a renowned Catholic Johannine scholar, says of the phrase,

> "However, *alazoneia*, found also in James 4:16, has a more active meaning than mere pride: It denotes arrogance, boastfulness, the conviction of self-sufficiency" (p. 408).

The term "life" is *bios* which refers to earthly, physical, temporal life on this planet (what mankind shares with the plants and animals, cf. 1 John 3:17, i.e., much like Hebrew *nephesh*). These characterizations describe both sects of Gnostic false teachers and unregenerate fallen mankind (pagans). God help us, they also describe immature Christians!

▣ **"is not from the Father, but is from the world"** There are two reasons Christians must not love the world.

1. that love is not from the Father (cf. 1 John 2:16)
2. the world is passing away (cf. 1 John 2:17; 2 Pet. 3:7,10,12)

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD

2:17 "The world is passing away" This is a PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE (cf. 1 John 2:8). This relates to the Jewish two ages. The new and consummated age is coming; the old age of sin and rebellion is passing away (cf. Rom. 8:18-25; 2 Pet. 3:7,10,12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

▣ **"but the one who does the will of God lives forever"** Notice how eternal life (i.e., literally "abides into the age") is connected to a loving lifestyle, not just a past profession of faith (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; James 2:14-26).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL (*thelēma*) OF GOD

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (Greek idiom)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:18-25

[18]Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. [19]They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. [20]But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. [21]I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. [22]Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. [23]Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. [24]As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. [25]This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

2:18 "Children" See note at 1 John 2:1.

▣ **"it is the last hour"** Literally it is "last hour" with no ARTICLE (found only here). Like "the last days," this is one of the phrases used in the NT to describe the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (cf. John 6:39-40,44). This is an important concept in John because in our day so many interpreters have been influenced by C. H. Dodd's "realized eschatology" (a major tenet of amillennialism). It is surely true that John uniquely and forcefully teaches that the Kingdom of God has come in Jesus. However, this text reveals that there is also a future consummation (event or period). Both are true. This is another expression of the NT tension (paradox) between "the already and the not yet" (i.e.; "is coming") of the two Jewish ages, which are now overlapped in time.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOUR

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE LAST DAYS (NT)

▣ **"antichrist. . .antichrists"** This descriptive phrase is both SINGULAR and PLURAL; neither term has the ARTICLE (following MSS א*, B, C). Only John uses this term in the NT (cf. 1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7). See fuller note in Contextual Insight to 1 John 2:3-27, D.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANTICHRIST

▣ **"is coming"** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE. In Koine Greek some forms of the Greek VERB fell out of use and other forms took over their function. Deponent VERBS are MIDDLE or PASSIVE VOICE in form, but are translated as ACTIVE VOICE in meaning. Here the PRESENT is used to express the certainty of a future event. The Antichrist, SINGULAR, is coming and many false teachers or false messiahs similar to him have already appeared (antichrists).

It is just theologically possible that since Satan does not know the time of Christ's return, he has someone already prepared to step into world leadership at any moment of opportunity. We have seen these types of individuals throughout history.

▣ **"have appeared"** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. The "anti"-Christ spirit is already present and active in this fallen world (i.e., the false teachers), yet there is still a future manifestation (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2). Some commentators understand this to refer to the Roman Empire of John's day, while others see it as a future world empire of the last day. In many senses, it is both! The last hour was inaugurated at the Incarnation and will last until the consummation (the Second Coming of Christ).

2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us" This is a perfect example of false teaching and false professions in the visible church (cf. Matt. 7:21-23; 13:1-9,18-23,24-30). Their lack of truth, love, and perseverance are evidences that they are not believers. Heresy always comes from within!

The author of 1 John is very careful in his choice of VERB TENSES. 1 John 2:19 reflects

1. the false teachers have left (AORIST)
2. they were never truly a part (IMPERFECT)
3. if they had been a part they would not have left (a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE with a PLUPERFECT VERB)

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY

▣ **"if"** This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is called contrary to fact. It should be translated, "If they had belonged to us, which they did not, then they would have stayed with us, which they did not."

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS, VII

▣ **"they would have remained with us"** This is a PLUPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which speaks of completed action in past time. This is one of several references to the doctrine of Perseverance (cf. 1 John 2:24,27,28). True faith remains and bears fruit (cf. Matt. 13:1-23).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

2:20 "you have an anointing from the Holy One" "You" is PLURAL which is emphasized in the Greek text in contradistinction to those who had left the Christian fellowship. It is possible that the Gnostics were influenced by the eastern "mystery" religions and taught a special anointing which brought knowledge and identification with a deity. John asserts that it was believers, not the Gnostics, who had the anointing (special equipping and empowerment) from deity.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOLY ONE

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE (BDB 603)

NASB	**"and you all know"**
NKJV	**"and you know all things"**
NRSV, REB	**"and all of you have knowledge"**
TEV	**"and so all of you know the truth"**
NJB	**"and have all received knowledge"**
Peshitta	**"and you are enabled to distinguish between men"**

This was a significant statement in light of Gnostic false teachers' arrogant assertions about their secret knowledge (i.e., oral teachings from Jesus). John asserts that believers have basic Christian knowledge (1 John 2:27 and John 16:7-14 and Jer. 31:34), not exhaustive knowledge

either in religion or other realms or knowledge (cf. 1 John 3:2). For John, the truth is both conceptual and personal, as is the anointing which can refer to the gospel or the Spirit.

There is a Greek manuscript variant in this phrase. The NKJV follows the uncial manuscripts A, C, and K, having *panta*, a NEUTER PLURAL used as a DIRECT OBJECT, while NASB follows manuscripts ℵ, B, and P, having *pantes*, a MASCULINE PLURAL, which focuses on the SUBJECT "you all." In light of the exclusivistic claims of the false teachers, the last option is best. The UBS^4 gives it a "B" rating (almost certain). The anointing and knowledge are given to all believers, not a select, special, intellectual, spiritual few!

2:21 This is one of many verses which assert that John's readers have faith assurance of redemption and know the truth (cf. 1 John 5:13). In this verse assurance is based on an anointing from the Spirit who has given believers a hunger for and knowledge of the gospel.

2:22 "Who is the liar" This phrase has the DEFINITE ARTICLE, therefore, John is referring either to

1. a specific false teacher (possibly Cerinthus)
2. the "big lie" and denial of the gospel (cf. 1 John 5:10)

"The liar" is parallel to "antichrist." The spirit of the antichrist is present in every age; a basic definition (the two connotations of the PREPOSITION "anti") is "one who denies that Jesus is the Christ" or "one who tries to replace Christ."

▣ **"that Jesus is the Christ"** The Jerome Biblical Commentary, p. 408, makes a good point,

> "The author does not mean simply the fulfillment by Jesus of the OT and Jewish expectation of a messiah. 'Christ' here has its full sense as the preferred NT designation of Jesus, whose words and deeds have proclaimed him the divine Savior of mankind (cf. John 1:29; Acts 2:31; Rom. 1:4)."

It is possible that this doctrinal affirmation functioned

1. as a polemic against Gnosticism
2. a Palestinian creedal formula that clearly separated the Synagogue from the Church; it may reflect the post-Jamnia (A.D. 70) curse formulas of the rabbis (i.e., "The Eighteen Benedictions")
3. like "Jesus is Lord," it may have been a baptismal affirmation (i.e., Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:9,11)

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

2:22-23 "the one who denies the Son" Apparently the Gnostic false teachers claimed to know God, but they denied, decentralized, and depreciated the place of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 4:1-3; 5:11-12; John 5:23).

Based on the writings of the Gnostics from the second century A.D., the comments within the NT, and the early church fathers, the following beliefs emerge.

1. The Gnostics tried to wed Christianity to Greek philosophy (Plato) and the eastern mystery religions.
2. They taught that Jesus was divine but not human because spirit was good, but matter (flesh) was evil. Therefore, there was no possibility of a physical incarnation of deity.
3. They taught two things about salvation
   a. one group asserted that a special knowledge of angelic spheres (*aeon*) between the High, good God and the physical world brought a salvation of the spirit unrelated to the actions of the body on the physical plain.
   b. another group accentuated physical asceticism (cf. Col. 2:20-23). They asserted that a total denial of bodily wants and needs was crucial to a true salvation.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GNOSTICISM

2:23 This verse in the Textus Receptus, following the uncial manuscripts K and L, has accidently shortened the original text by omitting the second parallel reference to the Father, which is strongly supported by the Greek uncial manuscripts א, A, B, and C.

▣ **"the one who confesses"** This is the exact opposite of "whoever denies" in 1 John 2:22 [twice] and 23 [once].

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION/PROFESSION

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "RECEIVE," "BELIEVE," "CONFESS/PROFESS," "CALL UPON"?

▣ **"the Son"** Fellowship with God is only available through faith in the Son (cf. 1 John 5:10-12,13). Faith in Jesus is not an option! He is the only way to the Father (cf. John 5:23; 14:6; Luke 10:16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SON OF GOD

2:24 "As for you" This shows a very emphatic contrast between John's hearers or readers and the false teachers and their followers who left the Christian fellowship (cf. 1 John 2:27).

▣ **"let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a grammatical emphasis on "you" (which is at the beginning of Greek phrase) in contradistinction to the false teachers' message. The gospel is personified and described as an indwelling guest. This is the first of two reasons given for the Christians' victory over the false teachers (the liars).

The second one is found in 1 John 2:20 and 27, where the anointing of the Spirit is mentioned. Again, the gospel as both message and person are linked by the phrase "from the beginning" (cf. 1 John 2:13,14,24 [twice]). God's word is both content and personal, both written and living (cf. 1 John 1:8,10; 2:20,24)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: "ABIDING" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

▣ **"If"** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means potential action. This continues the warning and admonition related to "abiding." The cessation of abiding reveals that they were never a part (cf. 1 John 2:18-19). The lifestyle evidence of "abiding" brings a faith assurance (cf. John 15). Abiding is a message heard and received and a fellowship with both the Son and the Father (cf. John 14:23) which is revealed in lifestyle choice, both positively (love) and negatively (rejection of the world).

2:25 "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life" Again the PRONOUNS in 1 John 2:25 are very ambiguous and can refer to God the Father or God the Son. Maybe this was purposeful (as in 2 Peter 1). Apparently this statement is much like John 3:15-16 and 6:40. The believer's hope rests in the character and promises of God (cf. Isa. 45:23; 55:11). Our intimate fellowship with the Triune God issues in the hope and assurance of the promise of eternal life (cf. 1 John 5:13). Eternal life has observable characteristics.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (OT)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:26-27

[26]These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

[27]As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no

need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

2:26 "those who are trying to deceive you" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. There are deceivers in every age (cf. Matt. 7:15; 24:11,24; 2 John 7). These are often sincere religionists who attend and are active in Christian gatherings.

2:27 "the anointing" This seems to emphasize the result of the anointing, not the means (the Spirit) or the elements (the gospel truths) involved. Anointing was an OT concept of the special call and equipping of a person for a God-given task. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. This term is etymologically related to the term "Messiah." Here it refers to the resulting stability which the Holy Spirit's enlightening of the heart and mind to the gospel brings to believers (cf. John 16).

The false teachers were claiming a special revelation from God (i.e., special anointing). John asserts that all believers already have the true anointing when they trust the Anointed One, are filled with His Spirit, and abide in God's word.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE (BDB 603)

▣ **"abides"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: "ABIDING" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

▣ **"which you received"** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE which points to some completed past act. The "anointing" is parallel to "you have heard" in 1 John 2:24. The gospel must be received

1. individually by faith (cf. John 1:12; 3:16)
2. as a body of truth (cf. 2 John 9-10; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Jude 3)

Both of these acts are mediated by the Holy Spirit.

For "receive" see See SPECIAL TOPIC: RECEIVE

▣ **"and you have no need for anyone to teach you"** 1 John 2:27 is a parallel to 1 John 2:20 (i.e., the New Covenant, cf Jer. 31:34). John is using recurrent themes (1 John 2:20,24,27). The Holy Spirit, not the Gnostic false teachers, is our ultimate and indispensable teacher (cf. John 14:26). However, this does not mean that the office and gift of teacher is not active in the early church and today (cf. Eph. 4:11; Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28). It simply means that basic things concerning salvation come from the Holy Spirit and the Bible, not from any special, gifted, human teacher, although He often uses them as a means.

▣ **"but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie"** This refers to spiritual truth. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit guiding his/her conscience. We must be sensitive to the Spirit's gentle leadership in areas of truth and ethics.

▣ **"just as it has taught you, you abide in Him"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. John uses the concept of "abide" extensively in this letter as an element of faith assurance for his readers (cf. John 15). Biblical faith is a covenant in which God takes the initiative and sets the agenda, but humans must initially respond and continue (abide)! There is both a divine aspect and a human aspect involved in abiding.

SPECIAL TOPIC: "ABIDING" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the false teachers' beliefs.
2. Give the evidence by which we can know that we are truly redeemed.
3. Explain the relationship between habitual sin and isolated acts of sin.
4. Explain the relationship between the perseverance of the saint and the security of the believer.
5. List and define the three enemies of man.

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